

2

Perspectives on Foodies and Food Tourism

Learning objectives

Readers are expected to learn the following from this chapter:

- A systematic approach to understanding and creating knowledge about foodies and food tourism: the elements of, and interconnections between the experience, antecedents, outcomes, dynamic processes, and planning and management
- How foodies and food tourism are studied in food studies, tourism, hospitality, the social sciences and humanities, and economics and business
- Constraining and propelling forces that explain the food tourism phenomenon
- Trends in food tourism

Understanding and creating knowledge about foodies and food tourism

Figure 2.1 illustrates how the core phenomenon of this sub-field consists of food-tourism experiences and the meanings attached to them by tourists and other stakeholders. The two basic questions are: “What aspects of food (i.e. food-related experiences) attract people to travel?” and “What aspects of food experiences satisfy or disappoint travellers?” The meanings people attach to their experiences are of great interest to psychologists, sociologists and cultural anthropologists. To some foodies a given experience can be purely hedonistic (i.e. pleasurable, fun) or identity building (as in “I am a true food lover, with expert knowledge”). To others, an experience can be about social belonging and group identity, say as a member of a social network.

Knowledge is also required about the antecedents (the demand side, including social-world and cultural influences), planning and marketing (who develops and markets food tourism, and why), outcomes (both intended and unintended, at personal, group and societal/environmental levels), spatial and temporal patterns of food tourism, and the other dynamic processes of policy and knowledge creation that influence the system.

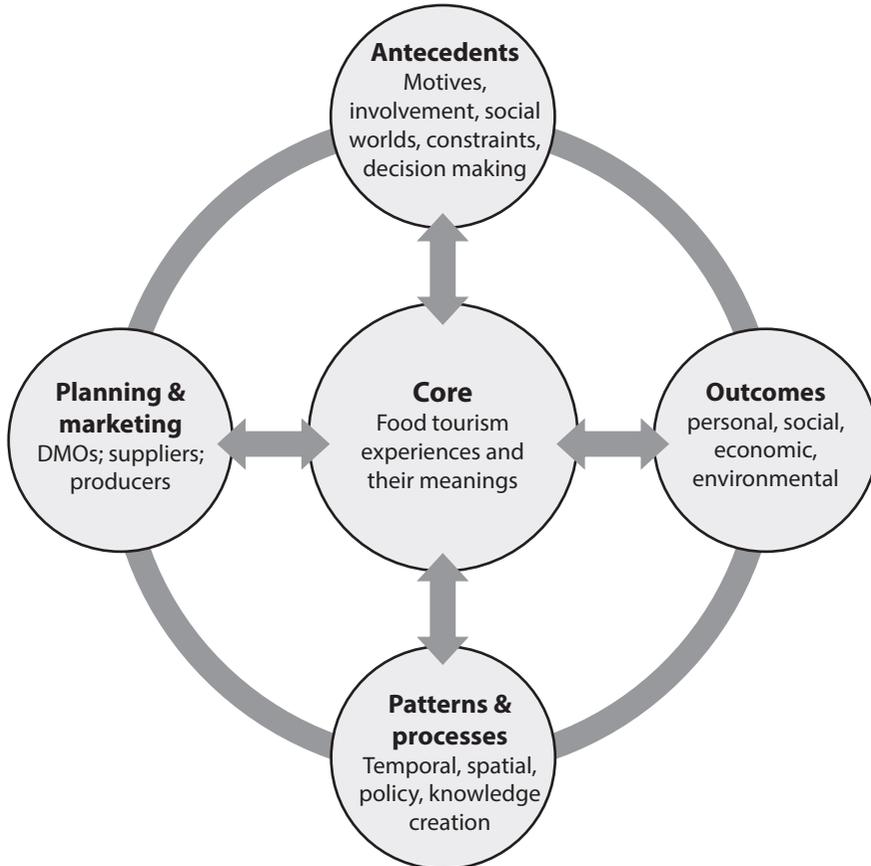


Figure 2.1: Understanding and creating knowledge in food tourism

■ A guide to using the framework

Understanding the foodie and food-tourism experience is the major purpose of this book, so there is pertinent material throughout. Searches of the Contents and Index can focus on key terms that are connected to each of these elements of the framework:

- **Core**, the key terms to search: ‘foodie’, ‘experience’, ‘identity’, ‘meaning’, ‘authenticity’, ‘serious leisure’, ‘communitas’, ‘social bonding’, ‘neophilia’ and ‘novelty seeking’, ‘hygiene factor’

- **Antecedents:** in addition to the Core terms above, see: 'involvement', 'motivation', 'seeking and escaping', 'lifestyle', 'social worlds', 'psychology', 'decision-making', 'image', 'propelling forces', 'trends', 'satisfaction', 'information search', 'word of mouth'
- **Planning and marketing:** 'planning', 'strategy', 'clusters', 'stakeholders', 'marketing', 'communications', 'media', 'brand(ing)', 'image', 'reputation', 'media and media management', 'co-creation', 'engagement', 'service dominant logic', 'hallmark event', 'iconic event', 'segmentation', 'psychographics'
- **Outcomes:** see 'goals', 'benefits', 'impacts', 'willingness to pay', 'spending', 'yield', 'sustainability'
- **Spatial and temporal patterns:** 'geography', 'history', 'forces and trends', 'clusters', 'local', 'terroir', 'provenance', 'foodways', 'foodscape', 'experiencescape', 'attractiveness';
- **Policy:** covered under 'policy', 'development', 'planning', 'sustainability', 'strategy', 'DMO', 'destination'
- **Knowledge creation:** see all the 'research' sections, research notes, the Appendix, and the summary in the conclusions

Studying food tourism

In Figure 2.2 we have positioned food tourism at the nexus of three fields of study: food, hospitality, and tourism. Each of these has unique perspectives to offer on foodies and food tourism. While food-studies people might see food tourism as an interesting phenomenon with some impact on agriculture or culture, tourism suppliers, restaurateurs, and destinations clearly see it as a special-interest segment to be developed for profit and competitive advantage.

■ Food studies

Because food is essential to all humans, it is at once a source of worry (will we run out? is GM food a threat or saviour?), of joy (just ask the foodies!), and pride (whose cuisine is the best in the world?). Food is an integral part of culture, in part owing to the fact that producing food through agriculture, fishing, hunting or gathering goes a long way to shape communities and nations. According to Delamont (1994) food is one of the most important sources of cultural distinction among communities and regions, owing to the forces of globalisation. In a rich, consumer society, food (or what people eat) is a hotly debated topic in the context of health, while in poorer and less naturally endowed parts of the

world over-consumption and waste is looked upon as an ethical issue, even as neo-colonialism.

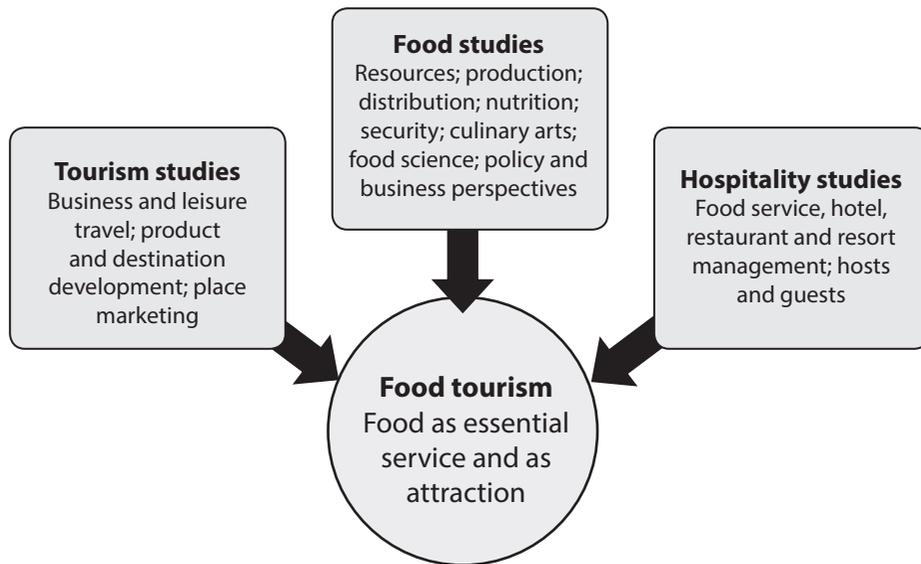


Figure 2.2: Food, hospitality and tourism studies

Food studies begin with sources, so its ties to agriculture, fisheries and natural resources are essential. So too are all the inputs to producing food, the business of food supply chains, and the livelihoods of farming/fishing communities. Policy is also a major theme, as food everywhere is on the political agenda and increasingly the subject of regulations and strategic planning by nations. When we consider the consumption of food, it begins with a combination of what's available (as influenced by natural resources and food economics), preferences (which are influenced by culture, including religion) nutrition (how concerned are people about healthy eating?) and even fads and fashion. How food is prepared requires food science, and culinary arts – the combination of which shapes the curricula of cooking and restaurant management. Both sociologists and anthropologists look at the bigger picture of the roles played by food and its consumption in society and culture. For example, in the sociology of food a concern is for inequitable access to food, while in a cultural anthropological context a topic of interest is 'foodways', or how geography and culture interact to shape cuisine.

If we start this discussion from the perspective of agriculture and fisheries, then we need to consider the full supply chain and how tourism changes demand. First, some tourists go straight to the source to 'pick your own' places and to farm stays. Second, foodies are fond of the 'fresh and local' mantra, so markets are extremely popular with them - especially if there is an opportunity to learn about,